DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 420 731 UD 032 384

AUTHOR	Perry, Theresa, Ed.; Delpit, Lisa, Ed.
TITLE	The Real Ebonics Debate: Power, Language, and the Education of African-American Children.
ISBN	ISBN-0-8070-3145-3
PUB DATE	1998-00-00
NOTE	227p.; "Published in collaboration with 'Rethinking Schools.'"
AVAILABLE FROM	Beacon Press, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, MA 02108-2892; World Wide Web: www.beacon.org ($12).
PUB TYPE	Books (010) -- Collected Works - General (020)
EDRS PRICE	Document Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Bidialectalism; Black Culture; *Black Dialects; Black Students; Elementary Secondary Education; *Language of Instruction; Nonstandard Dialects; *Political Influences; Teaching Methods; *Urban Language
IDENTIFIERS	*African Americans; *Oakland Unified School District CA

ABSTRACT

The recent discussions about the teaching of Black English, known as Ebonics, in the Oakland (California) school district have highlighted concerns about the right way to educate African American children. The authors of essays in this collection offer background history that explores the race and power dynamics surrounding the development of Ebonics and they discuss how an understanding of Ebonics may affect classroom practice. The authors, despite certain differences, are united in a respect for the language spoken by most African American children, regardless of what one calls that language, and in an understanding that African American children must be taught Standard English. Two essays in the first section, "Introductions," provide background in Ebonics and culturally responsive education for African American students. The second section, "What Is Ebonics?," presents six essays that discuss the characteristics of Ebonics as a language system with roots in Africa, rather than a substandard form of English. The third section, "Classroom Implications," contains eight essays that talk about ways to acknowledge and accept Ebonics while teaching standard English. The fourth section, "The Oakland Resolution," contains 11 essays and public documents that consider the ramifications of the Oakland decision and the district's educational policy. Section 5, "Personal Essays," contains two essays that talk about the relationship between Ebonics and Standard English in a personal context. A section on "Resources on Ebonics" presents suggestions from some of the authors about sources of additional information. (SLD)

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